

REMARKS

Claims 1, 4, 7, and 9-14 are pending in the present application.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 15, 16, 17 and 18 have been canceled.

Claims 1, 4, 7, 10, 11 and 12 are independent.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's continued indication that claims 6-14 recite allowable subject matter and would be allowed if rewritten into independent form including all of the features of the base claim and any intervening claims. In the above amendments, Applicants have added the allowable features of claims 6 and 8 to independent claims 4 and 1, respectively. Furthermore, allowable dependent claims 7, 10, 11, and 12 have been rewritten into independent form including the features of base Claim 4. Therefore, all of the pending claims are clearly in condition for allowance.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Mladenovic – Fujino Rejection

Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 (a) as being unpatentable over Mladenovic (U.S. Patent No. 6,657,996) in view of Fujino ((U.S. Patent No. 5,436,899). This rejection, insofar as it pertains to the present pending claims, is respectfully traversed.

As noted above, the allowable features of Claim 8, have been added to independent claim 1 to establish patentability. Given the previous indication of allowability for Claim 8, Applicants

believe that incorporating the allowable features of Claim 8 into independent claim 1 firmly establishes patentability for independent Claim 1. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of this §103(a) Mladenovic-Fujino rejection.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Mladenovic-Shanker-Fujino Rejection

Claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mladenovic in view of Shanker ((U.S. Patent No. 6,570,869) and further in view of Fujino. This rejection, insofar as it pertains to the presently pending claims, is respectfully traversed.

Claim 2 has been cancelled thereby clearly rendering this rejection moot. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection.

35 U.S.C. § 103(a) Mladenovic-Klotzbach-Delargy Rejection

Claims 4 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mladenovic in view of Klotzbach ((U.S. Patent No. 5,410,754) and further in view of Delargy ((U.S. Patent No. 6,029,127). This rejection, insofar as it pertains to the presently pending claim, is respectfully traversed.

As to Claim 4 and as noted above, the allowable features of Claim 6 have been added to claim 4 to further establish patentability. Also, claim 5 has been cancelled. Therefore, this rejection is moot and Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection thereof.

CONCLUSION

All rejections raised in the Office Action having been addressed, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance and such allowance is respectfully solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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